Why Does This Exist?

There are likely things you have read in various forms of media about what this blog is. You will find those descriptions to be generally incorrect.

Additionally, as a heads up, it's worth noting that in providing a concrete story and examples, this blog has apparently had the unintended side effect of helping a number of abuse survivors come to terms with their own relationships (and from what I understand, causing distress to some others who have not yet come to terms). I didn't really know what emotional abuse was when I wrote this blog, and the comments from therapists and survivors who have since taken the time to inform me have been tremendously helpful to myself and a number of other commenters. I'm grateful to those of you who have reached out, and apologize to those who came expecting a light read and left feeling any significant measure of distress. If you've never dealt with emotional abuse before (as I hadn't up until this point), it can be especially difficult to spot, as one of the most persistent patterns is being made to feel at fault for your partner's behavior. Each situation is different, so I'm hesitant to offer general advice, but if things get bad enough that you fear for your wellbeing, and you feel safe enough to do so, please consider calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

Edit: There is now an ongoing educational series exploring the forms of control and abuse apparently highlighted in this blog. In the hopes that it may educate people on what to look out for, here is a link to the first video in that series.

September 12, 2014thezoepost 33 Comments

TL;DR

primer: I DO NOT STAND BY THE CURRENT ABUSE AND HARASSMENT OF ZOE QUINN OR FRIENDS. STOP DOING THAT. IT IS NOT IN ANYONE'S BEST INTEREST.

addendum: Thanks for stopping!

Yes, this thing is huge. There was a lot of stuff so it needed a lot of words.

You can read the TL;DR if you're in a rush, though I recommend going through the whole thing if you want an approximation of a full picture. I offered proof where I could, because she's really good at taking advantage of a lack of it, and censored things that would likely lead to undue harm: here's a link to the TL;DR post.

TL;DR

If you take my recommendation to opt against the TL;DR — yes, this is written almost entirely in shitty metaphors and bitter snark. It's a post about an ex, and the tone reflects its intention as the starting post for forum threads entitled Cringe-Worthy Break Up Stories on Penny Arcade and Something Awful, because I figured it would be best to announce on friendly communities in innocuous ways. Penny Arcade and Something Awful deleted those threads, so now this blog stands alone. I will not take it down, because I know the information is important, even if what I have omitted means you never might.

And no, I never posted this to 4chan.

EDIT:

There was a typo up for a while that made it seem like Zoe and I were on break between March and June. This has apparently led some people to infer that her infidelity with Nathan Grayson began in early March. I want to clarify that I have no reason to believe or evidence to imply she was sleeping with him prior to late March or early April (though I believe they'd been friends for a while before that). This typo has since been corrected to make it clear we were on break between May and June. To be clear, if there was any conflict of interest between Zoe and Nathan regarding coverage of Depression Quest prior to April, I have no evidence to imply that it was sexual in nature.

Also, to make it clear that the logs aren't doctored:

Anyway, for lack of a better phrase; enjoy I guess.

August 16, 2014thezoepost 53 Comments

Act 0: Whereof One Cannot Speak, Thereof One Must Be Silent

(There’s a TL;DR in the last post; but I promise things get interesting if you read the whole thing)

——

Sometime around November of 2013, I signed up for an OKCupid account and got a 98% match with a cutie with colorful hair (cool), who was super into social justice stuff (good!), and was super into video games (neat!), and liked to make them (ah! I used to make them, that was fun times!), and by some coincidence turns out to have made a somewhat esoteric game I happened to have played a while back.

So I messaged her to meet up for drinks — on my birthday.

She seemed pretty cool; I didn’t talk much at first, and mostly listened as she related tales of adversities she’d overcome and how they’d shaped her as a person and fueled her determination to improve the world. I was enamored, but after a while she caught herself ranting and asked about my interests and from there we discussed all sorts of stuff from art to programming to neurology to artificial intelligence to philosophy to how the “is it a game?” argument has literally been going on for a quarter century before video games even existed. At which point she showed me a copy of Wittgenstein’s Tractatus Logico Philosophicus she carried around in her bag. Swoon — good birthday.

That date lasted about three days. And we went on a couple more and just kept hitting it off on every point, and within two weeks we threw caution to the wind and went exclusive — facebook official, the works.

We’d spend hours discussing anything and everything; though the conversations often turned to ethics, motivations, and stories of her past. Among the most

commonly recurring were:

Stories about how the grief and confusion of being raised by a pathological liar taught her to make it a point to always say what she meant, and to communicate at face value.

Stories about an extremely manipulative ex-husband, who would do things like refuse to stop wearing the ring from his last relationship, and make her feel terrible or insane for any discomfort she expressed — though he was in fact cheating on her as he was making her feel terrible for being worried.

The pain of spending most of her childhood alone, as well as the injustice of being ostracized from various groups and communities in her adulthood.

Views on the ethics of infidelity. Which she maintained is inherently wrong even if the person who was cheated on never finds out, because (aside from willfully endangering their partner by way of increased STD risk) if the unfaithful party then has sex with their partner, they are doing so under false pretenses, and therefore without their partner's consent. That is, sex with a partner who doesn't know you've cheated on them is sex without consent.

There were other strong principled positions, sometimes brought up for their own sake, sometimes brought up in relevant situations, and almost always tied to her past, but they didn't in any sense make up the bulk of our relationship. We'd spend a lot of time hacking around on our separate projects together, eating vegan food, flirting on tumblr, and having awesome sex.

Eventually she asked me to work with her on her new game, and I happily agreed.

She took me to IndieCade East, and she got me a pass to see her at GDC

FFKX9Sk.jpg

And it seemed everything was going immeasurably well until I started succumbing to pointless and seemingly inexplicable bouts of anxiety sometime between the very end of April to the very beginning of May. We kinda broke up, but kinda not. She'd often message me to say she loved me and wanted to be with me again someday. She had eyes only for me, she said, and wanted me to say the same for

her.

A few months later, around the end of June, we get back together (though this time she was worried about a mole among her facebook friend’s list, and so she didn’t make it facebook official until two weeks into the relationship, for a carefully vetted group of, by her estimate, roughly 200 friends or so). Before you know it we’re hitting on each other over tumblr again and sending cutesy couples photos whenever we missed each other.

OCMn2BA.jpg

She even flew me out to San Francisco on a last minute whim around early July (The last photo of this set is one she took of me in SF, though the goth nipples and smoke ring are both back in Boston). This was for the most part a good time —

Until I found out she’d been cheating on me with her boss (Joshua Boggs). And a few days later we have the following conversation, where I ask for her help finding and informing his wife:

Shit, man, what happened?

I mean, obviously she cheated on me (a lot actually), but why would someone violate their own beliefs on something as important to them as sexual consent? And what’s with all this fear of someone going public? What happened to her strong principled stance of unflinching honesty? Or of owning up to mistakes? What happened to the paragon of virtue I fell in love and set out to help fix the world with?

Well, the above conversation happens a few days after a considerably more painful one, where I discover almost none of the things I loved about her were true. I’ve included annotated logs of that conversation in the footer of the next act, so you

can verify that I am not making any of this up, but you don’t need to bother reading them if you’re not so inclined.

Each act will have a TL;DR at the end if you’re in a rush — There’s also a TL;DR of the whole thing at the end, and even a TL;DR of that — because I wish someone had given me a “Too Long; Didn’tRelationship” before I got into all this.

The next Act starts off in a comedic tone, but that’s mostly because it was too depressing to write any other way. It gets intense near the end, and then nothing is funny anymore.

August 16, 2014thezoepost gaming, thequinnspiracy, zoe quinn 13 Comments

Act 1: The Cum Collage May Not Be Entirely Accurate.

(Throughout Act 1 you will see numbers in double square brackets. These numbers are citations which you can use in conjunction with the chat logs to confirm that I’m not fucking with you.

Throughout this doc, the names of all innocent or even arguably innocent parties are censored.)

[trigger warnings: suicide references, (in citations: abuse references)]

July 14:

I had too much to drink at a karaoke bar the previous night to cope with an observation I’d made. An observation that, in tandem with countless other quiet observations made or remembered over the last couple of months, lead to a single inescapable conclusion — Zoe had been cheating on me.

I wake up hungover the next morning and look around the hotel room, but can’t find

Zoe. I check my phone to find she’s sent me a message to meet in Japan Town, so I take a quick shower and order a cab, but the driver almost immediately takes a wrong turn — at which point I remember the previous night.

Wait. Right. Shit.

I ask him to bring me back to the hotel, grab all of my stuff, and have him drive me to the library instead. Eventually Zoe messages me to ask where I am and why I ditched her, and I tell her she lied. She plays dumb, and I ask her what happened between her and Nathan Grayson, and — realizing what I’m most likely to have found out — she admits that she lied about not having had sex with anyone while she and I were sort of broken up between May and June, and that she had in fact been fucking Nathan for some portion of that time.

Friggen Nathan Stupid-Red-Pants-Wearing Kotaku-Writing Grayson.

She gets super remorseful and says how awful she’d felt about it and how not telling me was the most fucked up stupidest thing she’d ever done and how sorry she is and how she doesn’t know how I can ever forgive her for this one single thing she did wrong and is so wracked with guilt about.

Except that no — this ain’t amateur hour and just because Nathan was at the same bar last night doesn’t mean I’m limited to whatever he was most likely to have told me. Fuck, we never even so much as said hello. We just stood inches from each other with dinky little mix drinks in hand like a couple of imbeciles pretending there ain’t nothing awkward at all going on there.

No, that’s not how this works. How this works is I’ve had two possible pictures in my head for the past month. One that looked like some ransom-note collage of letters Scotch-taped over a cum-covered canvas spelling out “Zoe Quinn is the best person. Best possible person. You are a bad person if you think Zoe is not the best person.” And another in the form of a precision-carved jigsaw puzzle, for which all of the pieces I wasn’t missing fit perfectly into what seemed to be a subtly-worded message to the effect of “lol, ur an idiot, she’s a jerk, flip me over for list of dates and names of people she’s cheated on you with.”

How this works is I've been telling myself "Nah, that can't be what the jigsaw puzzle means. Look, this cum collage Zoe gave me says so."

How this works is Zoe gave me one more piece at the bar the previous night, because her only other option was to risk my getting a bunch more pieces from Nathan. That piece contained some fine print which read "The cum collage may not be entirely accurate."

So I ask Zoe what happened between her and Nathan before we were broken up, and she gives me some PR-laden "I was probably getting emotionally closer to him than appropriate. Right at the end of things with us."

Okay: some context here regarding "at the end of things with us." Right at "the end of things with us" she canceled the game we were co-developing and stood me up a bunch of times during the travel-free month's worth of time we were looking forward to spending together, as a result of which I had my first ever panic attack [April 29th], because I was worried the one person I'd ever managed to fall in love with might be breaking up with me for some reason I couldn't figure out. When I related these worries to Zoe, she assured me the relationship wasn't in danger and that she loved me and was even happy that I cared enough to worry. This was part of a fun little emergent two player power / head game she decided to play with me. The gist of the rules seemed to be as follows:

If boyfriend relates observations that lead to a correct belief, girlfriend is to make up false reason to explain observations. If boyfriend backs down, girlfriend wins.

If boyfriend doesn't back down, and notes girlfriend's reason conflicts with other observations, girlfriend must get angry and demand boyfriend trust her unconditionally. Boyfriend must then choose between trusting girlfriend, or trusting his own ability to so much as reason clearly.

If boyfriend chooses to trust girlfriend, girlfriend must demand he trust her about something that contradicts something else she demands he trust her about. When boyfriend cannot possibly act in any way that doesn't violate one of her principles or claims, girlfriend must establish he is going insane. If boyfriend succumbs to additional bouts of anxiety spent questioning his own sanity — girlfriend wins: multiply points by number of hours longest panic attack lasts.

If boyfriend does not back down, and decides instead to trust his own ability to think clearly, girlfriend must threaten to break up with boyfriend. If boyfriend backs down, girlfriend wins.

If boyfriend continues trusting simple reasoning, girlfriend must actually break up with boyfriend (for a period of time no shorter than 1 hour and not exceeding 2 days). If boyfriend does not bring up the subject again, girlfriend wins.

If boyfriend does not back down, and figures that since the relationship is over, he might as well try to get the universe to make sense, girlfriend must figure out some way to break up with him *even more*. If boyfriend drops the subject, girlfriend wins. If boyfriend does not drop the subject, repeat step 6 — point multiplier for number of times step 6 is repeated until girlfriend wins.

If boyfriend calls bullshit on the whole thing and breaks up with girlfriend, boyfriend wins. This is the only winning condition for boyfriend.

We played this game quite a number of times [up until around May 29th], and she won in every conceivable way the game allows. With any luck, knowing the rules in advance will be helpful to the next contestant; I had no such advantage.

In effect, what Zoe preferred to just telling me the truth, was to convince me I was going insane [[7]], pretend she had no idea why, say she just didn't have time to hang between work and the three friends from Texas she was letting crash at her house for a week [May 4th – 10th] and ostracize me for the duration of her newly truncated stay in Boston — all the while Facebook-messaging me nightly to tell me how much she loved me and was concerned about me — unless I tried to figure out anything that would make things make sense again, in which case: see game rules above.

What the jigsaw puzzle says, is that she made two of the friends up, and only Nathan was staying at her house that week. And she made every effort to avoid seeing me so she didn't have to be in the awkward position of hanging out with both her boyfriend and the guy she was cheating on him with. But we'll get to that.

I press her and ask what happened physically. She says "we got kinda cuddly."

The story so far then is that she avoided me for a week to have a guy sleep at her house, and they got "emotionally closer than appropriate" and the only result was that they "got kinda cuddly."

At this point I remind her of how just a few weeks ago she brought up the topic of trust, and went on for some time about how she would never be so irresponsible as to lie in a relationship, because, she said, a single breach of trust could break the whole thing.

So now I ask her why she would go so far as to even start that conversation if she had in fact been lying to me almost constantly for months, and all she can respond with is “I don’t have a good answer for that.”

I figure that reminding her of this thing she said would make her less likely to lie again, and ask her “who else?”.

“no one.”

Okay, there goes that.

I ask her again.

“no one else.”

What in the actual fuck? WHAT IN THE ACTUAL FUCK HOW HAS SHE NOT CAUGHT ON THAT I ALREADY KNOW AND AM GIVING HER A CHANCE TO COME CLEAN. I make it clear and tell her we can’t fix this if I can’t trust her, and she finally seems to get it.

“robin.”

Okay good who el– wait, what the fuck? Robin? Robin Arnott?? HE’S NOT ON THE JIGSAW PUZZLE LIST WHAT THE FUCK MAN I LIKED ROBIN! I showed him how neural nets worked at IndieCade back in February. What the fuck Robin, why you gotta be

like that? You knew we were dating the least you could've done was tell me.

I poker face and ask her "who else?" I tell her to list them all, not one by one so she can determine which ones I do and don't know about. I ask her to do it because she wants this to work between us. She ignores that and continues listing one at a time.

"Blue, once during the break, while we were drunk."

"Obviously."

"Turquoise, during the break"

Blue and Turquoise were on the jigsaw list. She definitely did both of them way more than once [throughout mid May to June], but in any case their names get censored because they presumably only had sex with her during the break, so unlike Robin Arnott, Joshua Boggs and Nathan Grayson, they weren't slimy enough to sleep with someone they knew was in a relationship. Though to be clear, Zoe and I agreed (minimally for STD concerns, but also because we both just kind of wanted the assurance) that we would tell each other if we slept with anyone during this break — Zoe however, thought it would be more fun to spend it playing a new game. Here were the rules:

Player must convince ex-boyfriend that player can't even entertain the thought of having sex with anyone but him. [[10]]

Player must bring up strong principled stances to prevent player's ex-boyfriend from sleeping with anyone but player.

Player may secretly have sex with as many people as desired.

Player gets one point for every person player secretly has sex with.

Point multiplier per hookup for each time player misleads ex-boyfriend into having unprotected sex with player (by telling him player has not had sex with anyone else).

Point multiplier per hookup for each time player goes on a long vocal tirade about

how unethical that sort of thing would be.

Point multiplier per strong principled stance brought up to convince ex-boyfriend not to sleep with anyone else.

She won the hell out of that game — but I want to take this opportunity to point out that we're not talking about some remedial course high schooler still figuring out how to not treat people like turds here. Zoe's 27 years old, and has 19 thousand twitter followers and her own wikipedia article touting her as a voice for all that is right and just and good in the world. And she's fucking smart.

"Who else? Everyone."

"Josh."

Joshua Boggs was also on the jigsaw list. Joshua Boggs knew she was in a relationship. Joshua Boggs is her boss. Joshua Boggs is married. Joshua Boggs is a total dick.

"Everyone. List them"

"I think that's everyone."[[1]]

. . . what? She thinks that's everyone? How does that even? What? Was she just being skeezy so nonchalantly that she'll just forget a few people here and there? Like, for whatever reason she just remembers those five guys?

And I keep thinking back on this and I'm like "Five guys. Man. she cheated on me with five guys? Five guys."

And now I can't stop mentally referring to her as Burgers and Fries.

D7ZifPD.jpg

But it’s okay, I will likely get past it so long as I remember it was very very probably considerably more than five guys. Thank god for that.

(There’s some confusion on this point. To be clear she cheated on me with 3 people while we were in an exclusive relationship, and 2 people while we were sort of on a break, during which she claimed we were functionally still exclusive.)

The conversation continues (paraphrased):

“And how long did it go on?”

“With Robin it was once during game jam [late March]. Everything was fucked up and I was drunk and lonely and fucking miserable. Josh was a few days later. Similar reasons”

“What was the nature of the relationship with Josh? How long did it go on?”

“A few days because he told me he had a wife”

“you’re failing here.”

“what?”

“you are lying.”

“no?”

“it’s over I’m sorry”

“What?? wait shit no I was misremembering. It started during GDC before you arrived I think? As well as later in LA” [March 16th – June 2nd?]

Okay first: the last two quotes are verbatim and the “I was misremembering” line is hilarious. [[2]]

Second: I got to GDC just the day after she did. Which means they had sex the night before I arrived. Which means she probably blew him like 12 hours before I kissed her. Which — I just don’t want to think about — but in any case, when she casually introduced me to Josh at a bar that night, he actually struck me as precisely the type of person with no reservations about sleeping with someone’s girlfriend given the chance. Though at the time, I hadn’t realized he’d been given that chance, and took it, just the night before.

Third: Holy shit hypocrisy — after we got back together [June 26th], Zoe more or less forbade me from associating with a female friend I’d been discussing some problem I was having trouble with (not even personal; about mapping vector fields onto non-orientable manifolds in n-space or some shit), who vaguely showed a tentative interest in me during our break-up.[[11]] Zoe was afraid that this friend, an immunocompromised fellow nerd with trauma problems, would try to sleep with me. On her own end, though (again, after we got back together), Zoe had no problem continuing to be friends with Robin and Nathan, both of whom not only showed an interest in her, but she actually screwed while we were dating. And — despite her strong principled stance against guys who cheat on their wives — she had no problem working for Josh after she found out he had a wife.

Fourth: At first I’m thinking “How was his having a wife the motivating factor in terminating that affair? How is that more important to her than her own boyfriend?” Then I’m thinking “Oh, it had nothing to do with me, she just didn’t want to do anyone skeezy enough to cheat on their significant other. Okay, yeah, I can totally relate to that. I can relate very well to that, actually.”

(In advance of any trilby-wearing e-sleuths, allow me to save you some time — yes, that means she was having sex with Josh Boggs right before he hired her. No, that doesn’t mean anyone’s going to risk their game’s success on an unqualified narrative designer for side benefits. Zoe is in fact a pretty solid narrative designer. And if there’s any significant fault to find in her narrative design, it’s that she never

stops doing it.)

Anyway, amidst a lot of lying and a lot of being backed into corners and a lot of shows of remorse, she goes on to admit that she also cheated on me with Nathan way before we broke up [Apr 1st – 6th], and that right at the end of things with us [May 4th – 10th] they did considerably more than get cuddly, and she did in fact ostracize me and convince me I was going crazy simply so that she could fuck Nathan and that she did in fact make up the other two friends staying over her house that week so it would look less suspicious.

Yeah all of that stuff is super fucked and I should cry about it later — but seriously who the fuck just makes two people up??[[5]]

Just — what?

Somehow, her reason for all of this was that I had told her I'd never been in love with anyone before, and that while she told me she was in love with me two months into the relationship [February 15th], I didn't say it back until a month later. And when I finally did, apparently I used the wrong tone [[6]]. So yes, obviously that means she should cheat on me with three guys for that month [she had sex with Josh, Nathan, and Robin throughout mid March to early April], and then continue adding guys to the roster every month thereafter. That's obviously the thing someone should do.

I ask her if she even meant that argument she made about consent, and she says she did. I ask her how she could agree with that and do THIS (a ton of times with a bunch of guys), and she says she's going to barf [[3]].

I don't let her know how disgusted or disgusting I feel — it wouldn't be a worthwhile conversation — and at this point I don't know if she actually cares; or at least I'm certain she didn't care enough to not do it.

I ask her how she could be willing to have sex with me without protection despite sharing my concern about STDs, how she could be selfish enough to do that guy

after guy simply because she didn’t want me to find out. I try to figure out how all this could have come from the unflinchingly righteous and honest person I thought I fell in love with.

She tells me she got tested.

I ask how she got tested in the timespan between having sex with me at GDC, and Josh the previous night.

She admits she didn’t get tested[[4]]. And says I never deserved any of this.

I ask her how she can say she believes all of these things. How she can say that convincing your partner they’re going crazy just to enable your own fucked up behavior is intolerably painful — and then go on to do just that. [[7]]

How she can talk about how horrible being ostracized was for her as both a child and an adult — and go on to ostracize people whenever it suits her interests (she did this to Nathan as well).

How she can be so vocal about something as important as sexual consent and establish that infidelity violates it — and then go on to cheat.

How she can talk about how confusing and awful dishonesty can be — and lie through an entire relationship, to enable all of the other behaviors she criticized.

How she can keep lying even as I’m giving her the chance to fix what she now says is the most important thing in her life.

She says she doesn’t know how she can live with herself. She says she just tried commit suicide, and I tell her I’m coming back to the hotel to keep an eye on her. [[8]]

Citation Images: VERY LARGE.

[[1-8]]

[[10]]

[[11]]

Also do not open if you don’t want a giant wall of chat logs.

Act 1 TL;DR: Act 1 TL;DR: Act 1 TL;DR: Act 1 TL;DR: Act 1 TL;DR:

Continue reading →

August 16, 2014thezoepost 35 Comments

Act 2: Fingers Crossed

A few minutes later I’m in the hotel room, sitting silently by the window as Zoe sobs. After a while she starts apologizing for how horrible she’s been.

She tells me how I’m the most important thing in her life.

How she'll never ever lie to me again.

How she promises it's all in the past.

How she'll understand if I don't trust her for a while.

How she's willing to do anything to earn my trust.

Really earn it this time.

Not just demand it.

I melt, and we start talking things through.

We discuss a bunch of options, and I remember a time I searched my inbox for the word "love" in front of her and at her request, and I ask her to return the favor (by allowing me to search her inbox for other words that might imply infidelity). It seems to me a sufficiently difficult step that it would show me she's serious, and it'd allow me to verify that the people she mentioned were the only people she had cheated on me with.

She tells me this is wrong. That it's a violation of the privacy of the people she's been messaging.

This is a sound ethical principle, but seems to be a somewhat manipulative strong principled stance given that the day before I'd been reconfiguring my wireless card, and remarked to Zoe that if I were to run a packet sniffer at that point, we'd be able to read in real time any unencrypted chat sessions from people connected to the same router. Zoe was really excited about this and encouraged me to do it (relax, I didn't). So it was apparently okay to violate the privacy of the people in the hotel,

but not that of the people in her inbox. And never mind, of course, that she had no issue reading through my own inbox a few months back.

I give her a “you’re joking.” look, and she asks me for some time to think on it. I tell her she can have some, but I need to go to a friend’s in an hour or so to do some work and make up for missed deadlines. By the time I need to leave she still hasn’t decided, and I tell her she can have more time to think, but she needs to promise me she won’t delete anything. I tell her I’m taking the first step in rebuilding trust here by giving her some. And I tell her that I really can’t keep doing this — if she violates it, it’s over.

With tears in her eyes she grabs me and hugs me and promises that all of the lying and dishonesty is over, she promises she won’t do anything to break this because it’s too important to her.

I make her give me one more promise — that she won’t hurt herself while I’m out, and that she’ll call someone to come watch her if she starts feeling like she wants to. She says she promises, and I leave.

It had, of course, occurred to me that I’d likely have no way of knowing if she deleted messages while I was out, but not knowing if she deleted anything wouldn’t put us in a worse situation. In the case that she fairly clearly didn’t (that is, the case where I find a bunch of flirting / solicitation), it would establish she’s serious, and we could try to find some way to make this work. And in the — at the time, unfathomable to me — case that she clearly did delete messages, it would blatantly show that this was the same sort of remorse she displayed when she claimed Nathan was the only transgression, in which case I could and should get away from all of this.

As far as I was concerned, one of the possibilities would leave things neutral, and two of the possibilities would make things better — albeit in different directions.

I manage to get very little work done at my friend’s house, and around 3am I head back to the hotel.

Act 2 TL;DR: Act 2 TL;DR: Act 2 TL;DR: Act 2 TL;DR: Act 2 TL;DR: Act 2 TL;DR: Act 2 TL;DR:

Continue reading →

August 16, 2014thezoepost Leave a comment

Act 3: Starting Over. And Over, and Over

I ask Zoe if she deleted anything while I was gone, and she promises she hasn't and states again that that's all behind her. I ask her if she's ready, but she's not yet, so we spend the next few hours trying to figure out how we're going to make this work out. At one point she sobs desperately that she doesn't know how long she can be in a relationship where her partner doesn't trust her, and I tell her she's demanding trust again. She sobs harder and tells me how terrible it feels that I don't trust her anymore, that she really ISN'T that person she was before, that she really IS the person I fell in love with now. That she couldn't even dream of acting like she had back then, and that she wishes I could just SEE that. She calms down and says she's tired, and would like to wait until morning to do this.

For the next four hours I lie awake next to the woman I love – or someone who I thought was the woman I loved, but who has yet to provide a reasonable explanation for what she's done to me. Who even after all of these revelations, I still can't help but trust.

The dissonance gets to me, and I tell her it's time. She stalls for a while, then begrudgingly grabs her laptop — and then stops. She starts to cry and tells me she doesn't think she can be in this relationship at all if the trust has gotten so bad that we need to do this. I tell her if she really feels that way, then it's her decision, and I get up to get my stuff. She backtracks quickly and logs into Facebook.

Before turning to the messages, I ask her to show me which of her friends she‘s given permission to view her relationship status (which she only just changed a few days ago). I’m disappointed to find she only set it to viewable for 50 people or so. Conspicuously missing from this list are any of the people she had cheated on me with. She gives a tame reason for the discrepancy, which is likely untrue, but even so, a minor enough lie that it isn’t worth losing her over. She hands me the laptop to look through her inbox.

I run a search for “love”, then a few other keyphrases. The results are all pretty innocuous. I open up the messages between her and Robin.

But the chat is empty.

“You deleted your message history with Robin.”

“Oh yeah, no I only ever talk to him through text too.”

I sit quietly for a moment, then get up and grab my bag “. . . I’m sorry. I can’t keep doing this.”

“What the hell? I told you I only talk to him over text, here, look!” She holds out her phone.

“Zoe, you promised you would take this seriously, and you promised you wouldn’t delete anything, but you’re not taking it seriously, because you did delete things, and you’re still lying.”

“What do you want from me? You’ve convinced yourself I’m lying and there’s no way to prove I’m not.”

I think for a bit. “Fine, put your phone on speaker, and call Robin and ask him to read out the last facebook messages he sent you.”

“Okay, let me just text him to see if he’s up.”

“No, if you text him first that will let you — what the hell am I doing, I already know you’re lying. I can’t do this, I need to go.” I head for the door.

“Oh wait no! I just remembered! I deleted his messages two weeks ago because he sent me something private!”

Oh god why won’t she stop? “No you didn’t. I can’t believe you’re still doing this.”

“What the hell! I’m not lying — how am I supposed to fix this if you won’t even believe me when I’m telling the truth?”

“We can worry about that when you start doing it.”

“Fine, whatever, if you don’t even believe me about this then it’s over anyway”

I leave the hotel, and ten minutes later, as I’m walking through the Tenderloin trying to find the library from the day before, Zoe messages me:

[836kb image]

40287_onlytoyou.jpg

Act 3 TL;DR:Act 3 TL;DR:Act 3 TL;DR:Act 3 TL;DR:Act 3 TL;DR:

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Act 4: You Look Like You Need It

I spend my last night in SF with a friend and take a cab out to the airport the next morning. As I wait for my flight, I start going through my Facebook message history with Zoe, trying to make sense of the last 7 months. I try to see things from her point of view, to reconcile things that were said with things that were done. Eventually it becomes too much to scroll through, and I organize a bit and dedicate a new tab to each date range. I roll my eyes at my own bad pun — I am literally keeping tabs on our relationship. I spend some time writing down thoughts and timestamps, hoping to get things to make sense again. It becomes too much, and I set it aside and wait for boarding call.

I ask the flight attendant for a whiskey — he gives me two and says “I only charged you for one, you look like you need it.”

Shit. I got the same comment from a homeless person the night before — after he gave me a cigarette.

I try to spend the flight home thinking of other things — I go straight to a friend’s house after touching down in Boston. This friend had insisted I stay with him during the panic attack week and aftermath — making sure I ate and slept, quick to provide distraction if ever I seemed in need of it. Back then, he spent a lot of time reassuring me I was being stupid to worry — that no one could possibly be so shitty of a person as to purposefully set up these situations.

Now, three months later, I’m setting my duffel bag down outside his house again. He opens the door, gives me a hug and says only “sorry for doubting you.” As if having been there for me put him at fault.

We spend the next hour smoking cigarettes on his porch, and as I fill him in, we begin to laugh; harder and harder as the story gets worse. He asks me if he can

write her a very sternly worded letter, and I tell him it wouldn’t make me feel any better.

He says it’s very much not on my behalf.

I ask him to at least wait until I figure out if she deserves one.

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Act 5: A Bug or a Feature

The next day I check Facebook and find that Zoe has unfriended me. Odd. I say something snarky about it on Tumblr. She sees it and facebook messages me with: “I unfriended you because I figured you’d never want to speak to me again, for what it’s worth (probably nothing). I won’t bother you again. Sorry.”

This doesn’t really make any sense, as it’s not like I have to message all of my Facebook friends, so, as has by now become habit when dealing with Zoe’s occasional incomprehensible answers, I don’t question it and (to stretch the jigsaw puzzle metaphor) just file it away as a puzzle piece.

I ask her if she was serious about getting back to being that person, and she says she was. And I tell her that the right thing to do, then, is to inform Josh’s wife. Zoe says she doesn’t have any info on her and freaks out about the possibility that she might go public. I’m disappointed that this is her primary concern. But she does at least recognize it as the right thing to do.

We spend the next four hours or so talking. Much of the conversation is open and calm — consisting largely of stories she’s already told about her past, but she gets mad and tells me she feels attacked whenever I ask about any of the inconsistencies in the claims she made about why or when she cheated on me. Asking about things that aren’t related to that seem fine though. This defensive behavior is new; she wasn’t responding like this when I first got her to admit to cheating, and I don’t really understand what’s changed. I throw it in the puzzle piece pile.

A few days later [July 19th] I check in on her, and ask when her therapy appointment is. She tells me the date, then gets mad and asks why I'm pressing her on this.

I tell her it's because she's in an environment that encourages and enables (and has potential to be harmed by) her behavior, and so she has something to gain by not taking therapy seriously. She takes a strong principled stance against letting me know if she's going to her appointments.

Practically speaking this strikes me as a serious problem. Given that lying has been such a successful strategy for her so far (with recent exception — which still took me months to be sure I wasn't just going crazy), there's no reason to believe she would want to change, and no reason to believe she isn't lying about trying to stop lying. We argue about it, and she says she's not doing therapy for me, and I tell her I'm not worried about me because I already know not to trust her. I'm worried about everyone she's misleading first, and — if she really does have a problem — her second. She gets angry again, and I decide to give her some space for a while.

It would at this point be impossibly dumb of me to just trust that she'll take it seriously, but I can't really do any more than hope.

I don't message her for the next four days.

(In retrospect, if I were asked to evaluate from a distance how seriously she's taking therapy — on a scale of "take therapy very seriously and go to appointments regularly" to "don't give a fuck and take a trip to europe for three months."

I would say that she isn't giving a fuck

fiM2vGI.jpg

And taking a trip to europe for three months

TAZt5CD.jpg

But I’m sure she has some good explanation for it. She always does.)

August 16, 2014thezoepost 8 Comments

Act 6: Damage Control

Four days later I’m not doing a very good job concentrating at work, and go to check Facebook for the first time in a couple of hours.

Apparently, at some point in that two hour timespan, Zoe either blocked me or deleted her profile.

I post on Tumblr:

“Oh cool yup. She definitely blocked me on facebook. I haven’t messaged her in 4 days, which probably makes that kind of a shitty thing to do to someone she’s already totally fucked over but whatever I guess. It’s pretty minor relative to everything else.”

Later that night she messages me on gchat.

[censored — not mine to reveal]

I am confused as to why she’s saying I’m not respecting her requests for space or time, since she hadn’t made any such requests (except for arguably the last conversation we had, after which I didn’t message her for four days). I toss it in the puzzle piece pile.

As for what she tells me, it convinces me to give the relationship another chance. At some point we start talking about this issue where she gets angry and defensive or says she’s panicking any time I try to understand more about her cheating on me, or why she kept telling me she wasn’t involved with anyone during the breakup, or why she tried to prevent me from sleeping with other people while she herself was doing it in secret, or any other of a host of unanswered questions. And I tell her that if we’re going to make this relationship work again, those things need to get talked about.

Dishonest? What the heck is dishonest about trying to figure out what was and wasn't true for the last 7 months? I guess I'll throw it in the puzzle piece pile for now.

Anyway, as expected, so long as we don't broach the subject of the past, she's calm and pleasant and sweet, and we even manage to joke around a little. Eventually, the information she revealed becomes irrelevant, and she has a meeting to go to, but sends me this text a few minutes after logging off.

God damn it yes. Thank you for being decent finally you lovable jerk.

We talk on gchat again the next morning, and the conversation isn't too tumultuous; though it doesn't offer me anything in the way of new information or closure. Eventually she says she has to go to bed and we say our goodnights and both log off.

I send her a message letting her know I have a question when I notice she's online some 6 hours later, but she doesn't respond. Four days go by and I don't hear from her. Weird?

It's plausible that she just hasn't been using gchat though.

I send her a text.

No response for the next day. I send her two more texts, and she's almost certainly ignoring me now. Why? This is confusing.

Welp, I'm stumped. Maybe the puzzle pieces will help. Let's see what we have.

Zoe unfriended me on Facebook.

Zoe's behavior when talking about things she did in the relationship has changed — In the conversation when I was at the library she would just lie a lot until cornered; now she gets defensive / angry / tells me to back off way before there's a chance to be cornered.

Zoe blocks me after I don't message her for four days on the grounds that I am not giving her enough space to heal.

Zoe says she feels like it's dishonest of me to be messaging her for closure??

Zoe says she wants to make things up to me, even if we don't get back together. But, after a fairly tame conversation, she ignores me for five days and counting.

I'm not seeing anything. Maybe it was something I said in our very last gchat conversation that morning after she sent her text?

Oh.

Oh god damn it.

God fucking damn it.

“do you wanna maybe try in person?”

“do you believe I want to fix this or not?”

“I don’t want to do this online.”

GOD FUCKING DAMN IT. SHE’S AVOIDED ME EVER SINCE THIS CONVERSATION BECAUSE SHE IS PARANOID I MIGHT GO PUBLIC AND DOESN’T WANT ME TO HAVE MORE LOGS.

Let’s look at the puzzle pieces again.

Zoe unfriended me on Facebook: She's establishing distance so I can't prove I know her or contact her facebook friends.

Zoe now gets defensive and angry when pressed for information: She does not want to leave more incriminating things in my logs.

Zoe deactivates her profile after 4 days of radio silence: She wants to decrease the plausibility of the logs I have by making them look like this:

She says it's dishonest of me to message her for closure: She's stopping just shy of flat out telling me she thinks I might go public.

Zoe ignores me after telling me she wants to make things up to me: Because making things up to me decreases the odds that I go public, but

She doesn't want to do that online: Because that's not worth the risk of my having more logs of more incriminating information.

JESUS CHRIST SHE IS FUCKING OSTRACIZING ME BECAUSE MAKING IT UP TO ME IS NOT WORTH THE RISK. Jesus F Christ what a selfish jerk.

I guess maybe I should at least make sure she isn't also just failing to recieve my texts. I give her a call, but it goes to voicemail after two rings.

I’d like some response, so I guess I should give some innocuous pretense. She still has my fancy headphones, and she’d probably want to minimize the number of reasons I have to continue contacting her, so she’d probably respond to a message asking for them back. I send her one more text to make sure:

Motherfucker.

———————————–

End.

———————————–

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TL;DR:

I dated Zoe Quinn. I thought she was the most amazing, kind hearted person in the world.

Turns out she was bullshitting pretty much everything I fell in love with her for, and is actually an unbelievable jerk. She lied to and manipulated me for months — effortlessly — because it was not believable that someone could be that selfish of a person, that convincing of a liar, and that good of a manipulator, while completely ignoring the very principles she so adamantly espoused. So I dumped her. Here's some stuff she did / does in no particular order or tense [which you can verify using the chatlog images in the footer of Act 1]:

Spend quite a bit of time talking about how she would never ever cheat on anyone because that violates sexual consent — all the while cheating on me

With Nathan Grayson

And Robin Arnott

And Joshua Boggs

(who is both her boss and married)

And at least two other people (whose names are censored). And very probably more — but I won't get into why I believe that.

As opposed to informing Joshua's wife, primarily freak out about her own career if his wife goes public.

Do her goddamn hardest to make sure I didn’t sleep with anyone but her while we were broken up. Inevitably succeed.

Sleep with a bunch of people while we were broken up, ignoring all of the strong principled stances she used to convince me not to.

Pretend we didn’t need to use protection whenever we had sex while we were broken up

or while we were together

Basically demand I ostracize a friend who was going through some seriously fucked up shit, because that friend had sort of showed a tentative interest in me while we were broken up.

On her own end though, apparently have no problem choosing to work for Joshua Boggs after cheating on me with him (which I feel requires a bit more than a tentative interest), or after finding out about his wife.

Spend an hour arguing that she would never lie in a relationship — while she was lying about all of the things in our relationship.

Stop at pretty much no length to prevent me from finding out the truth. If I had to lose 10 pounds to bouts of panic attacks spent questioning my own sanity for a sleepless week of being ostracized so she could spend that time cheating on me — well, that’s unfortunate for me, but the important thing was that I not be around to make things awkward between her and the flavor of the week.

Totally make two people up to divert suspicion from the fact that she was fucking Nathan. Seriously, she just — she made two people up. This probably doesn’t deserve its own list item but like, the claim that there were two additional people crashing with her was one of the things that made me think I couldn’t possibly have been right to worry during the panic attack week because who the hell would just fabricate . . . PEOPLE?

Later go on to ostracize Nathan for a week simply so she could fuck some other guys.

Have unprotected sex with me like 12 freaking hours after cheating on me with her boss.

Express remorse really damn well, really damn often, and only about the specific thing she has been caught doing. That is, express no remorse about any of the very related things she hasn’t been caught doing yet.

Lie in literally the same breath she is expressing remorse about having lied. Which isn’t to say her remorse is fake, I can’t know if it is or isn’t, it sure *looks* and *sounds* real enough. It’s just to say that her remorse doesn’t actually mean

anything in terms of future intent. She’ll promise never to do something again in a fit of despair and regret, and then do that thing like an hour later.

Lie a fucking LOT. Like holy shit how much more can one person possibly lie. At one point she actually lies about a lie about a lie about a lie.

A bunch of other fucked up things which I’m not even going to bother researching the legal ramifications of telling you about.

After making a grand show of remorse and expressing a desire to make all of this up to me, go on to ostracize me, because doing the right thing and making it up to me isn’t worth the risk that I might go public with any additional admissions if we have to talk things out online.

Be really fucking good at pretending to be worth looking up to.

TL;DR of TL;DR: Seriously, you really don’t want to trust Zoe Quinn.

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